

Winchester 73

By Jim Strong July 2010

The GUN that won the WEST. The Winchester 73 was more than a rifle, it became an American symbol. In fact it put Winchester on the map of the West. Certainly it played a major roll as it could be fired at a rate of 15 shots every 60 seconds. Chambered as a 44 caliber, 200-grain bullet, fueled by 40 grains of black powder, its' muzzle velocity reached 1200 feet per second. Accuracy was only about 150 yards. It remained in production for 52 years and 72,610 were made.

The "73" received a huge boost when Remington and Colt began chambering their revolvers for the .44/40. This eliminated carrying separate ammo for a rifle and pistol. Buffalo Bill carried a Winchester Model 73 and called ti the "Boss" and a pair of .44/40 Colts when he scouted for the Armin 1876.

Recent forensic ballistic data revealed at least thirteen model 73's were used in the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Apache Indians utilized the Winchester 73 as did Frank James, a number lawmen, and Texas Rangers. Jimmy Stewart starred in the 1950 western movie "Winchester 73". It is still a feature film on the Western TV channel. White Bull, a Cheyenne warrior carried a 17 loading Gun (Winchester) riding a bay horse. Other accounts vary on the number of Winchester 73's in the Custer Fight. PBS television has the most recent counts of how well the Indians were armed.

What is its value today...as a collector item...about \$80,000 for One of One Thousand of which only about 135 of them were made. If you find one with historical significance maybe \$200,000 would put it in your collection. Winchester made this "one of one thousand" issue of guns that had special features in the barrels, triggers, finish and accuracy.

Sources: Most of the data take from Field and Stream Magazine article about rifles; Augusts 2005